

BOOK REVIEW:
***Standards for the Nation*, by Henk de Vries, Doctoral Thesis,
1999**

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Standards for the Nation, subtitled "Analysis of National Standardization Organizations", by Henk de Vries, provides a valuable handbook for any Standards Development Organization (SDO). This work is the author's doctoral thesis kindly provided to this reviewer. A commercial edition of this work, *Standardization - A Business Approach to the Role of National Standardization* is planned for October, 1999 published by Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston/Dordrecht/London.

This book is based on the author's considerable experience at Netherlands Normalisatie-Instituut (NNI) a National SDO (National Standardization Organization[NSO] is the term he offers) and at ISO and IEC, both international SDOs. Almost all of the book's wealth of analysis is applicable to any SDO. The first four chapters develop the concepts of standards, standardization, NSO and actors (the many different types of participants in the standardization process). Chapters 5-7 then expand on the details of NSO operation and services, and suggest areas where NSOs can improve. He develops the concept of a "co-producing customer" who participates in standards development and then purchases the resulting standard. The author discusses the process of standards development and the issues raised by the co-producing customer. In total, chapters 1-7 form Part A. The author is very knowledgeable and thorough and able to clearly analyze the standardization process.

In Part B, the author rigorously provides analysis supporting the work in the first chapters and then expands into a number of areas of interest to an NSO or SDO: Improved systems to manage the development of standards, service standardization, propagation of standards, standards development methods and the idea of an SDO offering an outsourcing function to in-company standards departments. In each area, the author is meticulous in the development of the subject and provides a significant survey of the available literature and related concepts. He provides extensive references from English, Dutch, German and French sources.

As extensive as this work is, it does not consider some important areas of NSO interest: The Internet is causing a major change in the way all SDOs develop and deploy standards. While this book notes the possibility that standards may become available on the Internet at no charge, it offers little suggestion of how NSOs will fund

themselves, in such an event. It also notes the widespread use of independent document selling organizations (DSOs) to sell standards, but does not explore how the Internet will effect the NSO - DSO relationship. Coordinating the development of Internet standards with the development of communications standards is changing the way telecommunications SDOs operate. Coming from an ISO and IEC background, the author does not substantively address such issues of specific interest to telecommunications SDOs.

The book notes the decline in importance of NSOs as well as the rise of consortia, but does not provide guidance on how NSOs should respond. The growing problems with intellectual property rights in some NSOs is not addressed. In sum, the author develops and presents an academic and operational view of an NSO and its current issues and does not address the more market and legal oriented future issues of the NSO. In fairness to the author and the depth of material that has been provided, these omissions would be acceptable if they were not so critical to the future of NSOs.

This book provides a wealth of background ,detail and analysis of the NSO as it exists today. Annex 1 of the book provides considerable data on 70 NSOs, identifying that publication sales and government funding are often major sources of income. The distribution of standards over the Internet appears to decrease standardization funding. How NSOs respond to this major change in their funding is likely to be their most serious issue for the foreseeable future. Can increased government funding or private sector subscription provide possible alternative funding sources? Standards are becoming increasingly important to our technological society, but sources of funding for formal standardization organizations appear to be in decline. Hopefully, the commercial edition of this book will further address this issue.

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